

The Advocate

Newsletter of the Bridgeport Area Branch of the
American Association of University Women, Bridgeport, CT



April 2023

From the President

Happy Spring!

We're excited to host four University of Bridgeport students to attend NCCWSL 2023. You can find the student biographies in this newsletter.

The board is busy building our FY 2023-24 budget which we'll vote on at our May 2nd board meeting. We'll continue to support local community organizations, NCCWSL and our ongoing undergraduate/graduate scholarship program. It's unlikely that we'll continue a relationship with the Housatonic Community College Family Economic Security Program.

Overall, we're financially in excellent shape (despite changes in the stock markets). Our immediate concern continues to be whether we'll have enough members that have the time and bandwidth to 'keep our lights on'. If you have a family member or friend that can help, please let me know. We need assistance with our website plus launching and leading programs at the UB campus (such as AAUW Work Smart & Start Smart).

I look forward to seeing you at our annual lunch Saturday, June 10th. More information coming on this soon.

Best wishes, *Felicia*

Member Matters

Carole Fanslow shared the news that long-time member, **Phyllis Wing**, passed away in February. Phyllis joined the branch in 1976 and remained an active member of the Morning Book Group until just a few months ago.

Directory Update: To telephone **Gretchen Goethner**, please use the cell phone number listed in the directory; the other phone number has been dropped.



Scholarship Reports

Applications for the 2023 AAUW Bridgeport Scholarship Program were due by March 31. The Scholarship Committee will be meeting on April 15 to review this year's applications and make their recommendations to the board. The recipients will be announced at the Annual Meeting and Scholarship luncheon on June 10th.

NCCWSL 2023

As Felicia reported, we are very excited that our branch is sponsoring four students from the University of Bridgeport to attend the 2023 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders, May 31--June 3, at the University of Maryland. Below, read about their experiences and accomplishments as student leaders at UB and see why they are all such great candidates to attend this inspiring event.



Jaryee Cooper ▪ First-Semester Senior ▪ Major--Sports Management

I have always been interested in becoming a student leader at UB, but it took me some time to do so simply because I was shy and afraid. I've always thought of myself as a leader, so when the chance arose, I seized it and have not looked back. I took on leadership roles at UB in order to make the younger version of myself proud when we accomplished one of our many milestones. I wanted to be, and I still am, the voice for all the students who want to change something at UB but are unsure of how to begin or are timid. I wanted to

demonstrate to them that they could succeed if I did. The connection I made with students I gave tours to as a student ambassador or orientation leader, and their telling of how I had an impact on their lives, would be my most fulfilling experience as a student leader at UB. Whether it is about making the dean's list or submitting an application for a job on campus, they are not hesitant to share any positive news with me. Our interactions have increased my desire to lend a hand whenever I can. Regardless of where I stand in anything as I carry on with my life after college, I wish to always continue to assist anyone who is in need. I want to work as a sports agent for professional teams, and that means I need to be able to communicate with people of many backgrounds. UB has taught me that, and I've also learned to step outside of my comfort zone and strive for what I want. When it comes to being a leader or even simply as an individual, I have learned to constantly balance my soft skills and my management skills, and plan to always employ these skills and lessons wherever I go.



Fatima Khan ▪ Class of 2023 ▪ Major--Health Sciences

My interest in becoming a student leader came at a spontaneous time for me in my UB career. I was coming to the end of my freshman year where everything was online, and I wanted to start getting involved in some way but had no clue. Then my advisor at the time reached out to me about the opportunity to be an orientation leader and how she thought I'd be a great fit. I felt hesitant at first as I was starting my involvement journey all over again since the pandemic, but I felt like it was a sign for me to start something new! After starting orientation, I started connecting

with the amazing advisors in CSI [Center for Student Involvement] and started my career in the Student Government Association as a secretary. Working with other students felt so rewarding, knowing I could help make a difference in some way even if it was small. One of my most rewarding experiences as a student leader would have to be every time a fellow SGA member may ask me for help or advice. It's so rewarding knowing that I can be of assistance or guidance to other leaders. I also love seeing students that are able to benefit in some way from the initiatives being made to hopefully provide a better experience for them. It makes me so happy to see students that were a part of my orientation groups the previous year, join orientation as leaders the next year. I hope to continue these leadership skills I am learning into my journey of becoming a Physician Assistant. These opportunities will give me a better understanding in assisting my future patients and listening to their needs and advocating for them. I want others to see that anyone has the potential to become a leader, finding that one starting point can make such a huge difference. When I started my journey, my confidence was not at a high level, and I also dealt with social anxiety. I hope others can see that you don't have to be the most confident to be a leader and your intentions and approach to others mean so much.



Crystal Rankin ▪ Junior ▪ Major – Health Science, Minor – Psychology

I am a commuter from Stratford, Connecticut and I am currently in school to become a Physician's Assistant. I mostly want to work with Women's Health/ Maternity. I started my freshman year at the University of Bridgeport in Fall 2020. I only had one in-person class that year and it was held once a week. So, my freshman year was pretty much spent at home in my bed. Then in the beginning of my sophomore year when covid restrictions were letting up a bit, I knew something needed to change otherwise my 4 years at UB would be miserable. Luckily, I had made just the right friends that put me in the direction of joining the Student

Government Association, I started off as being the Assistant Secretary. That year a professor of mine recommended me to be a Student Ambassador, which I started in the spring semester. I then went on to be an Orientation leader that summer. At the beginning of my junior year, I was the Chief Financial Officer of SGA and now I serve as the Vice President. I was interested in becoming a student leader at UB because as a commuter student I felt like I was missing out on so much. Being involved on campus opened up so many doors for me that I would have missed out on otherwise. I didn't realize the opportunities that were readily available for me on campus until I got involved and it was the best decision I could have made. Being a student leader has given me many rewarding experiences. Since getting involved on campus I have been able to meet and work with some pretty important people. It seems like opportunity after opportunity is being offered to me, that otherwise wouldn't have been possible. I especially find it rewarding when classmates will come to ME with any concerns, questions, or ideas. Being a student leader has put me in a position where I can actually make a difference on campus and that is the most rewarding experience. I hope to accomplish many things with the leadership skills that I have learned at UB. I want to be a Physician's Assistant, but I don't want my professional career to end there. I have always considered myself the jack of all trades type so I know that I will go on to do so many more amazing things and the leadership skills I am learning at UB will put me on track to accomplishing all of my goals!



Kiana-Edith Robinson

Being involved has something I always did. In high school I joined more clubs than I can count, so when I got to the University of Bridgeport it was only in my nature to join as many clubs and organizations that I could fit in my schedule. Helping people find their voice to express their concerns has always been a goal of mine. Being in the positions that I am at UB helped me be able to bridge that gap between the students and the channel they needed to reach to solve their

problem. The most rewarding experience at UB has to be showing students that they can be anything that they want to be and more. I have always been pushed into a corner with what I can do with my life and have been limited in opportunities to keep me in that corner. Showing students that they can break that curse of being limited to a corner and they can explore is more rewarding than anything else. Across all the clubs and organizations I am involved in, I deal with many different types of students who come from many different places. However, I always see that no matter where you come from you always need that push to get out of your comfort zone, and that is something I believe I bring to students, and I hope to bring that into any workplace I am in after my time here at UB.

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We wish these impressive young women well at the conference and look forward to hearing how their NCCWSL experiences help to strengthen their skills and shape their goals for the future.

AAUW CT Reports

By Mary S. McDaniel

AAUW Connecticut State News

AAUW CT State rolled out a new statewide scholarship program. The goal is to support women pursuing higher education degrees and increase the visibility of the AAUW brand. Applications are being collected through April 15th. The scholarship is funded by a number of branches across the state (Bridgeport is not participating in this scholarship program).

[AAUW Scholarships | of Connecticut](#)

The State Spring conference is scheduled for **April 15th, 2023**. This will be a hybrid meeting.

An annual joint meeting between Shoreline and the Lower CT Valley Branches will be held on April 13th at 7:00 P.M. at the Pavilion at Saybrook Point. CT State President, **Nana Amos**, will be an invited guest for the presentation and for dinner prior to the event. The guest speaker will be the 2032-2024 Fellowship Recipient, Alyx Mark, a professor at Wesleyan University. Professor Mark is the recipient of an AAUW Foundation Research Development grant, and she will discuss the impact of the Covid pandemic on the access to justice.

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Updates from the AAUW State Branches

New London: **Kim Blake**

- The Branch met on March 8th to celebrate “International Women’s Day” with a presentation held jointly with the Waterford Public Library. Author and historian Carol Cohen presented Eleanor Roosevelt in her years after the death of FDR. Her presentation drew a large audience of over 81 people along with a handful of AAUW members. After the presentation, several participants took the flyers about AAUW and inquired about their meetings and the organization. The hope is that now this will bring in some new members.

Storrs/Willimantic: **Stephanie Dubinsky**

- Stephanie is sitting in for **Loretta Wrobel**. The March branch meeting welcomed guest speaker Pat Wilson Pheanious, Board Chair of the Witness Stones Project. The purpose of the Project is to restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved who helped build our communities. This is done by conducting research, providing educational activities in schools and communities, and installing Witness Stones in a town ceremony, in front of the place where the enslaved person lived, worked or worshiped. Information about the project can be found at witnessstoneproject.org. The next meeting in April will finally be “in person” and will be held at Eastern CT State University. The topic will be garden pollinators presented by the Pollinator Pathway in Ashford, CT.

Lower CT Valley: **Deb Dehertogh**

- The Branch Book Author luncheon on Saturday, March 25th featured authors Heather Webb and Amy Poeppel. Heather’s new book, Strangers in the Night and Amy’s book, The Sweet Spot were available for purchase. Lindy Elkins-Tanton discussed her book Portrait of a Scientist as a Young Woman at the evening book group. On Thursday March 7th, the monthly meeting featured guest speaker Evaonne Klein, CEO, CT Coalition to End Homelessness and her discussion on the “Face of Homelessness in CT.” In 2022, the number of homeless persons rose from 2,594 to 2,930, likely due to the continued economic fallout from the pandemic, paired with inflation and a lack of housing. The Branch is still in the process of getting a 501(c)(3) status. To date, there is one participant attending the upcoming June NCCWSL conferences.

Danbury: **Julia Horne**

- The Branch celebrated International Women’s Day. The Branch Book Author Luncheon is scheduled for Saturday, May 20th. The guest author will be T.J. Altieri. He has written three books, 1) Lowside Symphony; 2) Controlling Interest and 3) Foundations. The Mentorship Initiative has been put on hold until May or June. and participants who had originally volunteered to participate will be contacted at that time.



Study & Discussion Groups

Morning Book Study

This group meets on the fourth Tuesday of most months from September through May, at 10 a.m., and at this time is continuing to meet remotely. Any Bridgeport Area Branch member is eligible to join. For more specific information about the Morning Book Study Group, please contact the Chair: **Merrilyn Decker**: 203-268-5013 or merrdeck@aol.com. If anyone would like to receive the Zoom link to a meeting(s), please send your email address and request to **Cindy Sullivan** at: SullivanCA57@yahoo.com.

Remaining discussion programs and leaders for 2023 are:

DATE	BOOK	LEADER
Apr. 25+	<u>The Woman they Could Not Silence: One Woman, Her Incredible Fight for Freedom, and the Men Who Tried to Make Her Disappear</u> , by Kate Moore <i>+Pre-selection (for next season) following discussion session</i>	Gerry Dunbar
May 23	Final selection of books for 2023-2024 season	All Members

Evening Book Group

Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, at **3 p.m.** For questions, contact **Gretchen Goethner** (203) 254-8481 or **Mary Misevich** (203) 255-3804. All members are welcome to join, whether or not you've read the book. Upcoming meetings in 2023 are:

Apr. 19 How the World Really Works, by Vaclav Smil – Reviewer/Hostess: **Mary Misevich**

May 17 Horses, by Geraldine Brooks -- Reviewer/Hostess: **TBD**

Making a Difference

It's always gratifying to learn how the support of our branch benefits other people and organizations in our communities. Below is an excerpt from a thank-you note for our recent donation to the **Mercy Learning Center** from **Jane E. Ferreira**, President & CEO.

"On behalf of the women and children enrolled at Mercy Learning Center, I thank you for your gift of \$500. It is only with your generosity that our students are able to learn and achieve goals that were previously unimaginable.

Your belief in the power of women's literacy and in our holistic approach to education stabilizes and strengthens our students. It allows MLC to couple academics with critical support services—including free childcare and preschool—to meet basic life needs. The MLC student can then make learning a priority, which is transformative for her and her family.

Countless students have written thank you notes to the Center and to people like you for supporting them. Recent MLC graduate, Claudia says: 'Mercy Learning Center is a source of learning, motivation, and essential supports. It represents hope for all women like me who struggle every day not to give up.'"

AAUW Bridgeport Branch Calendar of Upcoming Activities

Apr. 15	Sat.	10am-2pm	Scholarship Committee Meeting – home of Amy Gillis
Apr. 15	Sat.		AAUW State Convention
Apr. 19	Wed.	3 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: Mary Misevich, Fairfield
Apr. 25	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study – (via Zoom)
May 2	Tues.	7-9 p.m.	Board Meeting – Unity Hill Church, 364 White Plains Rd., Trumbull
May 17	Wed.	3 p.m.	Evening Book Group – Hostess: TBD
May 23	Tue.	10 a.m.	Morning Book Study – (via Zoom)
Jun. 5	Mon.	7-9 p.m.	Board Meeting – Unity Hill Church, 364 White Plains Rd., Trumbull
Jun. 10	Sat.	TBD	Annual Meeting and Scholarship Luncheon



AAUW Bridgeport: www.aauw-bpt.org/
AAUW Connecticut: <https://aauw-ct.aauw.net/>
AAUW National: www.aauw.org/